Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathawada University Nanded, Maharashtra, India

SOCIETY, POLITICS AND CULTURE IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF RAMU RAMNATHAN:A CRITICAL STUDY

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Submitted by

Mr. Ashok Bapurao Bhosikar

Under the Supervison of

Dr.Durgesh B. Ravande

Assistant Professor of English
K K M College Manwath
Dist.Parbhani(MS)

Research Centre

School of Languages, Literature and Cultural Studies

Swami RamanandTeerthMarathwada University CampusNanded

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SOCIETY ,POLITICS AND CULTURE IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF RAMU RAMNATHAN: A CRITICAL STUDY

The present research study proposes to make an analysis of society,politics and culture in the select plays of Ramu Ramnathan such as ***Shanti, Shanti It's A War(1993)Curfew(1999)The Boy Who Stopped Smiling(1998) Mahadevbhai (1892–1942) (2002)Collaborators(2003).*** Ramkrishnanan Ramnathan,or Ramu Ramnathan as he is popularly known,belongs to the current breed of writer-directors writing plays in English.Ramu Ramnathan is dedicated and committed apostles of change and social justice, have skilfully utilized the platform of drama to expose and ridicule the social evils in Indian society.He is one othe the foremost Indian playwrighs who establish his rebellion stance exploring and presenting the issues of culture, myth, politics history, globalizations and colonization etc. The plays of Ramu Ramnathan are noteworthy in setting up the basic framework of how society, politics and culture are the real motives behind violence,discrimination and inequality.His plays are mimetic representation of life combining in itself the real and the fictional, art and reality, presenting the events and characters within a dimension of space and time. It combines the qualities of narrative poetry with of visual arts. It is a narrative made visible. His plays have made bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both thematic concerns and technical virtuosities.

Drama is an important cultural performance of **Society**. The social environment, in which individuals are born and live, shapes their attitudinal, emotional and behavioral reactions and the perceptions about what is happening around. The study of drama would enable to reconstruct the history, understand the society and comprehend its identity. Society in select plays exposes the bitter suffering or cruelty of humanity at different levels, superlatively loathes and condemns evil of all its shapes and shades and greatly succeeds in tuning our hearts to compassion and beauty. Ramnathan creates a scintillating melody of moods–joy and sorrow, hope and fear, tranquillity and anger, love and lust, humour and pathos.He made his plays a medium to present his anguish that renders reality of humiliation.He probes deep into the various facts and facets of human life through his galaxy of characters in social ethos which has been betrayed by the evil design of society. His plays are concerned with issues related to the rapid growth of social and political power that is taking over the individual. The select plays deal with questions of the present times, of contemporary society and of people who feel alienated from everything around them. Most of

his plays are set in an Indian background, using the traditional folk forms, myths and legends, history or present day society. These plays are thus, a mirror of contemporary Indian society.

Politics helps to comprehend the prevailing political system, its values, ideas and norms. It means a conscious use of politics in literature would make it an effective aid of social transformation, because for the artist, the political, historical events are more fundamental than the factual events or facts. Ramu Ramnathan in his plays remarkably uses the political drives of human relations, emotions and events.Although these plays protest against contemporary problems, their handling of the theme has universal appeal. The struggle of the victims to overcome their odds arouses the playwright's deep creative impulse. A political inquiry helps to comprehend the prevailing political system, its values, ideas and norms. In this regard George Orwell aptly comments "The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude". Ramu Ramnathan in his plays remarkably uses the political drives of human relations, emotions and events. Every incident in the world is organizing attempt of politics. Ramu Ramnathan through his characters and incidents in the play analyses the role of politics in human lives.

Culture influences thinking, language and human behavior. Culture is the most complicated word in the English language says Raymond Williams. Cultural studies find its origin in the British cultural studies movement of 1950s and late 1960s in the writing of Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall and RaymondWilliams. Culture is a broader concept that defines the pattern of human knowledge which imbibes customs, beliefs, social formations as well as racial, religious,political,social traits of groups or group of people. It also denotes to our acquaintance and familiarization with humanities, fine arts, science, business, rituals and conventional and intellectual pursuits. It is an unification of various social practices orient to gender, culture, and politics.. Cultural determinism is a reality developed by many theories explaining default assimilation of socio-cultural values of individuals and their influence on attitudes, mentalities, perception and their behaviours. Obviously, the levels of culture are multiple and each level has its influence to some extent. In general, what comes from the national culture is considered to have the strongest influence, but there are cultural dominants with origin in ethnicity, religion, social class, age, gender, education - training, etc. Levels of culture or combinations of values set peoples fundamental and jointly activities.

Shanti, Shanti It's A War(1993) is a musical spoof of the Mahabharata. Ramu Ramanathan's take on the mythological text plays with issues of identity, power politics, duty, free will and desire, while paying "tribute to the freewheeling loknatya tradition in Maharashtra" (stage directions by the playwright). Along with humour, the play also incorporates strands of feminism. The paradox of the title translates meaningfully into the performance of the play.

Curfew(1999) is about a pair of tween brothers who can get nothing done because of repeated,unexpected curfews.This play is a mixture of hindu mythology pitted against the present pop culture with humour and ironic comments.It tackles socio political implications of curfew in society.

The Boy Who Stopped Smiling(1998) is a children's play in the Grips theatre style,which swept the world in seventies.Grips is based on the ideology of opposition,and the importance of questioning grown ups,elders and status quo.Grips plays were not' traditional' children's plays with fairy tales and dream worlds.They tackled real issues and social problems,in an extremely imaginative eand entertaining manner.In this play Ramu stresses on the importance of asking questions.

Mahadevbhai (1892–1942) (2002)is a reminder of a healthy tradition that is slowly being obliterated by the devices of deep hatred and prejudice. The character who occupies centre stage is Mahadev Desai, secretary and onlooker to Gandhiji. The play is based on the daily diary that Mahadevbhai maintained, in which he jotted down the innumerable letters to and by Gandhiji, as well as conversations and banter, lectures and discourses. The form chosen is lively storytelling, interspersed with humour, as one actor plays out various historical characters like Gandhiji, Mahadevbhai, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, among others. The attempt is to understand the thoughts and principles that Gandhiji stood for; principles that are even more relevant in today's world: Non-violence, religious tolerance, removal of untouchability and discrimination, improving the status of women. The play attempts to remind us political values of the times gone by, and create a show that is as captivating and charismatic as the men and women themselves.

Collaborators(2003) deals with the minute investigation of four characters who inhabit this land, that is, India, Bharat, Hindustan. The play tries to understand their backgrounds and the cause for their being such brutal and apparently narcissistic collaborators. The play presents a mesmerizing journey into the tormented mind of these four characters, and the nation**.** Even as

today's fables, unfold! ***Comrade Kumbkarna*** is about a community of folk theatre artists living on the margins. They are extremely poor and struggle incessantly to survive in an apathetic world. The protagonist, named Kumbhakarna by his family so he can sleep instead of asking for food every day, narrates his journey, showing us his encounters with the state and power.

The Research Problem:

The study analyses society,politics and culture in the select plays of Ramu Ramnathan. These issues are always at the forefront of developed and undeveloped countries and culture. In spite of globalization and westernization in all spheres of life the innate human longing for individual identity continues to remain a major tour de force in both life and literature.The study of society,politics and culture in the select plays of Ramu Ramnathan will explore these issues and their existence in Indian cultural clans leading to categorization and discrimination.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the present research study are to analyze the politics,society and culture in the five select plays of Ramu Ramnathan. Even after continued years the major issues of humanity leading to oppression remains the same. Some of the objectives are noted down below.

1) To interpret the society and its values in the select plays.

2) To interpret the power politics in the select plays.

3) To explore the cultural values in the plays.

4) To elaborate the multilevel conflicts in the select plays.

5) To explore literary and theoretical perspectives in select plays.

Hypothesis:

It is assumed that

1. The select plays deals with the questions of present time.
2. The select plays denote the multiple aspects of politics.
3. The playwright dramatizes the various aspects of cultures.

Research Methodology:

Depending on the text matter, parameters would be developed and applied for perceiving and diagnosing the society,politics and culture. However, the research design used in this study in one of the exploratory, analytical and interpretative type. . It will be close textual analysis of the each select plays. A comprehensive and adequate understanding in select plays is the main concern. Discussion with playwright, eminent scholars,interviews, will lead to the conclusion.

Review of Literature:

After the great playwrights Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, SatishAlekar , Mahesh Elkunchawar , HabibTanvir and GirishKarnad ,Ramu Ramnathan is the leading contemporary playwright who makes his plays successful on the stage and in the minds of readers and audience. His plays are thought- provoking dealing with the issue of the human lives. As far as secondary resources on Ramu Ramnathan and his plays concerned are available in less quantity. The present study of his select plays would explore a new insights to the branch of literature and knowledge therefore, the present research work is original in nature.

Scope and Limitations of Research:

This research would deal with five select plays of Ramu Ramnathan. The select plays are ***Shanti, Shanti It's A War(1993); The Boy Who Stopped Smiling(1999) Curfew; Mahadevbhai (1892–1942); Collaborators(2003);*** Consequently as per the requirement an attempt would be made to study other plays, interviews,articles, of the author to deliberate the standpoint for comparison as well as for cross analysis.However,this research would be limited to the analysis of society,politics and culture aspects in the five select plays of Ramu Ramnathan.

Contemporary Relevance and significance of the Study:

The exploration of these plays in the perspective of society,politics, and culture would create consciousness about human relationships, history, myth, hegemony, ideology and discrimination in Indian society. Information technology, science, globalization and westernization have deeply influenced our lives but still in metropolitan families and societies as well as rural families and societies gender, culture, and politics have been playing the integral part. The study may open an avenue for research interpreted in exploring the dramatic world of Ramu Ramnathan. This study would elaborate through the select pays. The study may open an avenue for research interpreted in exploring the dramatic world of Ramu Ramnathan.

Tentative plan of the Research:

Chapter I :

This chapter intends to analyze a review of Indian English Drama and its contemporary status. This will analyze the wider acceptance of the concepts of society, politics, and culture as well as documents the biographical and literary contribution of Ramu Ramnathan.

Chapter II :

This chapter would be a detailed study of society and its implication in the six select plays. This chapter would narrate, analyze, and evaluate society and its role in constructing the themes in the plays of Ramu Ramnathan. The characters, events, incidents in her plays are ample to study the role of society in constructing the cultural pattern of the society and submissive creation of norms.

Chapter III:

This chapter would be a study of politics and its indoctrination in human lives. It will analyze politics of gender, human relationships, myth, education, culture. It will also explore the role of politics in Indian theatre.Politics is the root cause of every human activity. In all his plays Ramu Ramnathan defines the politics of human relationships in a dignified way.

Chapter IV:

This chapter will detailthe relevance of culture in both life and literature. It would explore its wider acceptance and existence along with gender and politics. To establish this argument all the five select plays will be taken in consideration.Culture imbibes several norms, tradition, rituals, custom and beliefs. Every cultural clan of the world creates ladder to maintain its significance and role. Indian culture also consist several norms where woman is always the matter of subordination. Caste plays a vital role in Indian marriages and rituals and inter-caste marriages are no less than big sins.Rules of every activity is fixing to the persons or group of persons. Treatment to Dalit, poor's, laborer is no longer dehumanizing.Ramu Ramnathan analyses the cultural differences so well in hIS plays.

Chapter V :

This chapter would be the summing up of the arguments and observations recorded in earlier chapters. It would pinpoint and analyze,elaborate the findings leading to society,politics, and culture in select plays.This chapter would co-relate and test the objectives to record findings and see if the answer of the posed questions are discovered. It collects the lives of all strata persons directly and indirectly. These issues dominate in myth, history, culture, language and it offers a dividing structure of society where no two human beings are treated as equal.

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Research Supervisor **Research Student**

Dr.Durgesh B.Ravande **Ashok B.Bhosikar**